

receiving at the resource server authentication data for a user from a client terminal of the user and validating at the resource server said authentication data by reference to said stored authentication details;

storing at the resource server:

(1) an identifier for the client terminal, the identifier indicating said terminal to be a currently authenticated terminal; and

(2) the access status of the user of the currently authenticated terminal; and

enabling said resource server to validate a request for said document from the client terminal of said user, which request includes said identifier, by checking that said stored access status includes said document.

2. (Twice Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein said identifier is transmitted in a cookie to said client terminal.

3. (Thrice Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein said identifier is received from said client terminal with said authentication data.

4. (Twice Amended) A method according to claim 3, wherein a new identifier is issued to said client terminal if said authentication data is invalid.

5. (Twice Amended) A method according to claim 4, wherein said identifier comprises data indicating the number of times an invalid authenticator has been received from said client terminal.

6. (Twice Amended) A method according to claim 5, wherein said method comprises issuing no further identifier to said client terminal if an identifier received from said client terminal indicates that a predetermined number of invalid authenticators have been received from said client terminal.

7. (Thrice Amended) A method according to claim 1, comprising timing out said identifier as an identifier of a terminal of a currently authenticated user if no document request is received from said client terminal for a predetermined period.

8. (Thrice Amended) A method according to claim 1, comprising authenticating said user for access to a plurality of Web servers located in the same Internet domain; and

enabling each of said Web servers to validate document requests from the client terminal, which requests include said identifier, by checking said status data on receipt of a document request.

9. (Twice Amended) A method of operating an authenticating server system for authenticating users at client terminals remotely connected

via a data communications network, to control access to a plurality of resource servers, said method comprising performing the following steps in said server system:

storing in at least one of the resource servers authentication details and access status data of authorized users;

performing at the at least one of the resource servers remote authentication of a user by reference to said stored authentication details and during said remote authentication step generating the access status data of the user, distinguishing said user from other users which are not currently authenticated, and a secret encryption key shared with said user;

storing said access status data in the at least one of the resource servers to check an authentication status of said user by using an identifier for the client terminal received in a service request to check the stored access status data; and

storing said shared secret key in a data store accessible by at least one of said resource servers for use during communications with said user.

10. (Twice Amended) A method according to claim 9, wherein said remote authenticating step comprises issuing a challenge to the client terminal, receiving a response to said challenge, and verifying said response.

11. (Twice Amended) A method according to claim 9, further comprising updating said access status data for an authenticated user following said storing step.

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12. (Amended) A method according to claim 11, wherein said updating step is performed in response to a time-out associated with said access status data.

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13. (Amended) A method according to claim 11, wherein said updating step is performed in response to access by one of said resource servers to said access status data.

14. (Thrice Amended) A method according to claim 12, wherein said updating step is performed in response to a request by the client terminal.

15. (Thrice Amended) A method according to claim 9, wherein said identifier is an IP address of the client terminal.

16. (Thrice Amended) A method according to claim 9, wherein said authentication step comprises issuing said identifier to the client terminal.